

SWR-0056

U.S. APPLICATION NO. (IF KNOWN, SEE 37 CFR

09/856816

TRANSMITTAL LETTER TO THE UNITED STATES
DESIGNATED/ELECTED OFFICE (DO/EO/US)
CONCERNING A FILING UNDER 35 U.S.C. 371

INTERNATIONAL APPLICATION NO.
PCT/EP99/07166INTERNATIONAL FILING DATE
September 27, 1999

PRIORITY DATE CLAIMED

TITLE OF INVENTION

METHOD FOR PRODUCING A COATING FOR THE ABSORPTION OF NEUTRONS GENERATED IN THE NUCLEAR REACTIONS OF RADIOACTIVE MATERIALS

APPLICANT(S) FOR DO/EO/US

KLAUS-LEO WILBUER, ET AL.

Applicant herewith submits to the United States Designated/Elected Office (DO/EO/US) the following items and other information:

- This is a **FIRST** submission of items concerning a filing under 35 U.S.C. 371.
- This is a **SECOND** or **SUBSEQUENT** submission of items concerning a filing under 35 U.S.C. 371.
- This is an express request to begin national examination procedures (35 U.S.C. 371(f)) at any time rather than delay examination until the expiration of the applicable time limit set in 35 U.S.C. 371(b) and PCT Articles 22 and 39(1).
- A proper Demand for International Preliminary Examination was made by the 19th month from the earliest claimed priority date.
- A copy of the International Application as filed (35 U.S.C. 371 (c) (2))
 - is transmitted herewith (required only if not transmitted by the International Bureau).
 - has been transmitted by the International Bureau.
 - is not required, as the application was filed in the United States Receiving Office (RO/US).
- A translation of the International Application into English (35 U.S.C. 371(c)(2)).
- A copy of the International Search Report (PCT/ISA/210).
- Amendments to the claims of the International Application under PCT Article 19 (35 U.S.C. 371 (c)(3))
 - are transmitted herewith (required only if not transmitted by the International Bureau).
 - have been transmitted by the International Bureau.
 - have not been made; however, the time limit for making such amendments has NOT expired.
 - have not been made and will not be made.
- A translation of the amendments to the claims under PCT Article 19 (35 U.S.C. 371(c)(3)).
- An oath or declaration of the inventor(s) (35 U.S.C. 371 (c)(4)).
- A copy of the International Preliminary Examination Report (PCT/IPEA/409).
- A translation of the annexes to the International Preliminary Examination Report under PCT Article 36 (35 U.S.C. 371 (c)(5)).

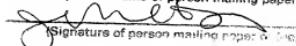
Items 13 to 20 below concern document(s) or information included:

- An Information Disclosure Statement under 37 CFR 1.97 and 1.98.
- An assignment document for recording. A separate cover sheet in compliance with 37 CFR 3.28 and 3.31 is included.
- A **FIRST** preliminary amendment.
- A **SECOND** or **SUBSEQUENT** preliminary amendment.
- A substitute specification.
- A change of power of attorney and/or address letter.
- Certificate of Mailing by Express Mail
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Jennifer Natson
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U.S. APPLICATION NO. (IF KNOWN) 37 CFR 097856816	INTERNATIONAL APPLICATION NO. PCT/EP99/07166	ATTORNEY'S DOCKET NUMBER SWR-0056
21. The following fees are submitted:		CALCULATIONS PTO USE ONLY
BASIC NATIONAL FEE (37 CFR 1.492 (a) (1) - (5)) :		
<input type="checkbox"/> Neither international preliminary examination fee (37 CFR 1.482) nor international search fee (37 CFR 1.445(a)(2)) paid to USPTO and International Search Report not prepared by the EPO or JPO		\$1,000.00
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> International preliminary examination fee (37 CFR 1.482) not paid to USPTO but International Search Report prepared by the EPO or JPO		\$860.00
<input type="checkbox"/> International preliminary examination fee (37 CFR 1.482) not paid to USPTO but international search fee (37 CFR 1.445(a)(2)) paid to USPTO		\$710.00
<input type="checkbox"/> International preliminary examination fee paid to USPTO (37 CFR 1.482) but all claims did not satisfy provisions of PCT Article 33(1)-(4)		\$690.00
<input type="checkbox"/> International preliminary examination fee paid to USPTO (37 CFR 1.482) and all claims satisfied provisions of PCT Article 33(1)-(4)		\$100.00
ENTER APPROPRIATE BASIC FEE AMOUNT =		\$860.00
Surcharge of \$130.00 for furnishing the oath or declaration later than months from the earliest claimed priority date (37 CFR 1.492 (e)).		<input type="checkbox"/> 20 <input type="checkbox"/> 30 \$0.00
CLAIMS	NUMBER FILED	NUMBER EXTRA
Total claims	15 - 20 =	0 x \$18.00 \$0.00
Independent claims	2 - 3 =	0 x \$80.00 \$0.00
Multiple Dependent Claims (check if applicable).		<input type="checkbox"/> \$0.00
TOTAL OF ABOVE CALCULATIONS =		\$860.00
Reduction of 1/2 for filing by small entity, if applicable. Verified Small Entity Statement must also be filed (Note 37 CFR 1.9, 1.27, 1.28) (check if applicable).		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> \$430.00
SUBTOTAL =		\$430.00
Processing fee of \$130.00 for furnishing the English translation later than months from the earliest claimed priority date (37 CFR 1.492 (f)).		<input type="checkbox"/> 20 <input type="checkbox"/> 30 + \$0.00
TOTAL NATIONAL FEE =		\$430.00
Fee for recording the enclosed assignment (37 CFR 1.21(h)). The assignment must be accompanied by an appropriate cover sheet (37 CFR 3.28, 3.31) (check if applicable).		<input type="checkbox"/> \$0.00
TOTAL FEES ENCLOSED =		\$430.00
		Amount to be: refunded \$ charged \$
<input type="checkbox"/> A check in the amount of to cover the above fees is enclosed. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Please charge my Deposit Account No. 06-1130 in the amount of \$430.00 to cover the above fees. A duplicate copy of this sheet is enclosed. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any fees which may be required, or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 06-1130 A duplicate copy of this sheet is enclosed.		
NOTE: Where an appropriate time limit under 37 CFR 1.494 or 1.495 has not been met, a petition to revive (37 CFR 1.137(a) or (b)) must be filed and granted to restore the application to pending status.		
SEND ALL CORRESPONDENCE TO:		
CANTOR COLBURN LLP Daniel F. Drexler 55 Griffin Road South Bloomfield, CT 06002 Customer No. 23413 Telephone: 860-286-2929		
 SIGNATURE <hr/> Daniel F. Drexler NAME _____ <hr/> 47,535 REGISTRATION NUMBER _____ <hr/> May 25, 2001 DATE _____		

09/856816

JC18 Rec'd PCT/PTO 25 MAY 2001

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IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

APPLICANT: KLAUS-LEO WILBUER, ET AL.

TITLE: METHOD FOR PRODUCING A COATING FOR ABSORPTION OF
NEUTRONS GENERATED IN NUCLEAR REACTIONS OF RADIOACTIVE
MATERIALS

PRELIMINARY AMENDMENT

The Assistant Commissioner of
Patents and Trademarks
Washington, DC 20231

Dear Sirs:

Before examining the present application, please amend as follows:

IN THE SPECIFICATION:

Please insert the following subtitle before the first paragraph on the first page of the specification:

- -TECHNICAL FIELD- -.

Please insert the following subtitle before the second paragraph on the first page of the specification:

- -BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION- -.

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Jennifer Nation

(Typed or printed name of person mailing paper or fee)

(Signature of person mailing paper or fee)

Please insert the following subtitle before the first paragraph on the fifth page of the specification:

- -SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION- -.

Please insert the following subtitle before the second paragraph on the fifth page of the specification:

--DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION--.

Please insert the following Abstract on a clean sheet after the claims:

- -ABSTRACT

The invention relates to a method for producing a coating for absorption of neutrons produced in nuclear reactions of radioactive material which can be applied in an economically feasible and simple manner, increases the effectivity of absorption, enables greater variability of base material used and variability of shape of said shielding elements and in particular the production of lighter shielding elements with at least the same absorption quality. The invention also relates to a method for producing a coating for absorption of neutrons produced in nuclear reactions of radioactive materials. At least one part of a shielding element consisting of base material is provided at its surface designed therefore with a layer made of an element with a high neutron capture section and a metallic element in a dispersion bath. Said metallic element can be deposited by electrolytic or autocatalytic means. During the coating process, a relative movement between a surface to be coated and a dispersion bath is effected at least temporarily, whereby the element with a larger neutron capture section is present in an electrically conducting compound in said dispersion bath.--

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please replace claims 1-15 with the following rewritten versions:

1. (Amended) Method for producing a coating for absorption of neutrons generated in nuclear reaction of radioactive materials, whereby, in a dispersion bath, at least part of a shielding element, comprising a base material, is coated on appropriately predefined surfaces with a layer composed of an element with a high neutron capture cross-section and of an electrolytically or autocatalytically precipitable metallic element, while at least intermittently during the coating process a relative movement is generated between the respective surface to be coated and the dispersion bath which dispersion bath contains the element with the high neutron capture cross-section in a form of an electrically conductive compound.
2. (Amended) Method as in claim 1, wherein the element with the high neutron capture cross-section is at least one of the elements of the group consisting of boron, gadolinium, cadmium, samarium, europium and dysprosium.
3. (Amended) Method as in claim 1, wherein the electrolytically or autocatalytically precipitable metallic element is one of the elements of the group consisting of nickel, cadmium and copper.
4. (Amended) Method as in claim 1, wherein the electrically conductive compound of the element with the high neutron capture cross-section is a metallic compound.
5. (Amended) Method as in claim 1, wherein the electrically conductive compound of the element with the high neutron capture cross-section is a metal boride.
6. (Amended) Method as in claim 1, wherein the element with the high neutron capture cross-section is in the form of an isotope with an augmented neutron capture cross-section.

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7. (Amended) Method as in claim 1, wherein the relative movement is generated by moving the object to be coated.

8. (Amended) Method as in claim 1, wherein the relative movement is generated by blowing in a gas and/or by introducing ultrasound waves.

9. (Amended) Method as in claim 1, wherein the coating is formed by chemical means.

10. (Amended) Method as in one claim 1, wherein the coating is formed by electrolysis.

11. (Amended) Method as in claim 1, wherein a coating with a layer thickness of up to 800 µm is produced.

12. (Amended) Method as in claim 1, wherein the element with the high neutron capture cross-section, or any of its compounds, is embedded in a metal matrix at a concentration of up to 60% by volume.

13. (Amended) Method as in claim 1, wherein at least periodically during the coating process the dispersion bath is thoroughly mixed.

14. (Amended) Method as in claim 1, wherein the process is performed in a ceramic or glass vessel.

15. (Amended) Absorber produced by the method of claim 1, comprising an inorganic base material and, thereon, a layer composed of an element with a high neutron capture cross-section and an electrolytically or autocatalytically precipitable metallic element, said layer containing an element with a high neutron capture cross-section at more than 20% by volume.

REMARKS

Applicants request entry of the present amendments which conform the claims to U.S. practice. No new matter is being introduced by this Amendment as antecedent support is set forth in the original specification and in the original claims.

Prosecution on the merits is respectfully requested.

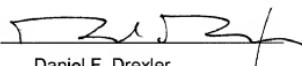
The Examiner is invited to contact Applicants' Attorneys at the below-listed telephone number regarding this Preliminary Amendment or otherwise regarding the present application.

If there are any charges with respect to this Amendment or otherwise, please charge them to Deposit Account No. 06-1130 maintained by Applicants' attorneys.

Respectfully submitted,

KLAUS-LEO WILBUER, ET AL.

Applicants' Attorneys

By: 

Daniel F. Drexler

Registration No. 47,535

Customer No. 23413

Date: May 25, 2001

Address: 55 Griffin Road South, Bloomfield, CT 06002

Telephone: 860-286-2929

VERSIONS WITH MARKS TO SHOW CHANGES MADE

IN THE CLAIMS:

Claim 1 has been amended as follows:

1. (Amended) Method for producing a coating for [the] absorption of neutrons generated in [the] nuclear reaction of radioactive materials, whereby, in a dispersion bath, at least part of a shielding element, [consisting of] comprising a base material, is coated on [its] appropriately predefined surfaces with a layer composed of an element with a high neutron capture cross-section and of an electrolytically or autocatalytically precipitable metallic element, while at least intermittently during the coating process a relative movement is generated between the respective surface to be coated and the dispersion bath which dispersion bath contains the element with the high neutron capture cross-section in [the] a form of an electrically conductive compound.

Claim 2 has been amended as follows:

2. (Amended) Method as in claim 1, [characterized in that] wherein the element with the high neutron capture cross-section is at least one of the elements of the group [comprising] consisting of boron, gadolinium, cadmium, samarium, europium and dysprosium.

Claim 3 has been amended as follows:

3. (Amended) Method as in [one of the preceding claims, characterized in that] claim 1, wherein the electrolytically or autocatalytically precipitable metallic element is one of the elements of the group [comprising] consisting of nickel, cadmium and copper.

Claim 4 has been amended as follows:

4. (Amended) Method as in [one of the preceding claims, characterized in that] claim 1, wherein the electrically conductive compound of the element with the high neutron capture cross-section is a metallic compound.

Claim 5 has been amended as follows:

5. (Amended) Method as in [one of the preceding claims, characterized in that] claim 1, wherein the electrically conductive compound of the element with the high neutron capture cross-section is a metal boride.

Claim 6 has been amended as follows:

6. (Amended) Method as in [one of the preceding claims, characterized in that] claim 1, wherein the element with the high neutron capture cross-section is in the form of an isotope with an augmented neutron capture cross-section.

Claim 7 has been amended as follows:

7. (Amended) Method as in [one of the preceding claims, characterized in that] claim 1, wherein the relative movement is generated by moving the object to be coated.

Claim 8 has been amended as follows:

8. (Amended) Method as in [one of the] claim[s] 1 [to 6], [characterized in that] wherein the relative movement is generated by blowing in a gas and/or by introducing ultrasound waves.

Claim 9 has been amended as follows:

9. (Amended) Method as in [one of the preceding claims, characterized in that] claim 1, wherein the coating is formed by chemical means.

Claim 10 has been amended as follows:

10. (Amended) Method as in one [of the] claim[s] 1 [to 8], [characterized in that] wherein the coating is formed by electrolysis.

Claim 11 has been amended as follows:

11. (Amended) Method as in [one of the preceding claims, characterized in that] claim 1, wherein a coating with a layer thickness of up to 800 µm is produced.

Claim 12 has been amended as follows:

12. (Amended) Method as in [one of the preceding claims, characterized in that] claim 1, wherein the element with the high neutron capture cross-section, or any of its compounds, is embedded in [the] a metal matrix at a concentration of up to 60% by volume.

Claim 13 has been amended as follows:

13. (Amended) Method as in [one of the preceding claims, characterized in that] claim 1, wherein at least periodically during the coating process the dispersion bath is thoroughly mixed.

Claim 14 has been amended as follows:

14. (Amended) Method as in [one of the preceding claims, characterized in that] claim 1, wherein the process is performed in a ceramic or glass vessel.

Claim 15 has been amended as follows:

15. (Amended) Absorber produced by the method [per at least one of the preceding claims, characterized in that it consists of] of claim 1, comprising an inorganic base material and, thereon, a layer composed of an element with a high neutron capture cross-section and an electrolytically or autocatalytically precipitable metallic element, said layer containing an element with a high neutron capture cross-section at more than 20% by volume.

WO 01/24198

PCT/EP99/07166

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Method for Producing a Coating for Absorption of Neutrons Produced in Nuclear Reactions of Radioactive Materials

This invention relates to a method for producing a coating designed to absorb the neutrons which are generated in the nuclear reaction of radioactive materials. The invention also covers an absorber produced by said method.

Depending on their purpose, material and condition, radioactive substances, especially those derived from the operation of nuclear reactors, when to be replaced and/or tested and transported and/or stored, are shielded from one another to prevent any further nuclear reactions engendered by their inevitably emitted neutrons. For ensuring the desired level of neutron absorption it has been customary to employ absorbers in the form of various storage shafts, canisters, tubes and similarly configured containers surrounding and thus shielding a neutron-emitting object. The use of such absorbers permits for instance the compact storage of neutron-emitting elements, especially fuel rods from nuclear power plants.

EP 0 385 187 A1 describes a fuel-rod storage rack where a number of absorber sheets form multiple shafts which enclose the fuel rods over their entire length. These absorbers are shafts or tubes which consist of a neutron-absorbing material, such as boron steel, i.e. an alloy steel with a boron concentration of 1 to 2%. Apart from the complexity of producing these absorbers, they are exceedingly cost-intensive, yet their effectiveness is limited due to the low boron content. In an attempt to increase the boron content, the deposition of a boron-nickel alloy was investigated. While the boron concentration can be increased up to 8%, the attendant cost increases by a factor of 10, ruling out any cost-effective use of this type of storage tubes.

For other purposes such as the transport and/or storage of radioactive materials, processes have been employed whereby layers of nickel are deposited on the metal surfaces of the containers.

US patent 4.218.622 describes a composite absorber where a thin carrier foil or thin carrier sheet is coated with a polymer matrix in which boron carbide particles are embedded. The base material of the carrier foil or carrier sheet is preferably a fiberglass-reinforced polymer. The boron carbide particles are evenly distributed over the surface of the polymer matrix at a concentration of up to 0.1 g/cm^2 . When used in a fuel rod storage rack, this composite absorber is in the form of a foil or sheet up to 7 mm thick, suspended between an inner wall and an outer wall. US patent 4.218.622 does not indicate whether a homogeneous distribution of the boron carbide particles over the

surface of the polymer matrix can be assured in the long run, especially in view of possible surface abrasion.

EP 0 016 252 A1 describes a method for producing a neutron absorber. The process involves the plasma spraying of boron carbide, together with a metallic substance, onto a substrate, causing the boron carbide to be embedded in a matrix of the metallic substance. The process is also designed in a way that any oxidation of the boron is avoided. The absorber thus produced is intended to be chemically stable against a liquid medium such as that present in a fuel rod storage basin. The metal and boron-carbide layer applied by plasma spraying is at least 500 µm thick. The boron carbide content is about 50% by volume. Suitable metallic substances include aluminum, copper and stainless steel, with the substrate containing the same metallic substance as that in the sprayed-on layer. Obtaining sufficiently effective neutron absorption requires a relatively thick boron carbide-based layer. Specifically, the thickness of the layer is 3 to 6 mm.

The German provisional patent DE-AS 1.037.302 and German patent DE 2.361.363 describe a process whereby tubes and especially tin cans are electrolytically coated on their outer surfaces with an absorber material that protects them against radioactive radiation. Neither DE-AS 1.037.302 nor DE 2.361.363 provides any information on the procedural steps or equipment for the technical implementation of the change of the physiochemical state and material conversion involved in the application of the absorption material.

EP 0 055 679 A2 describes methods for producing shielding elements, whereby boron carbide is applied on the surface of the shielding element either by plasma coating or,

following an electrolytic or chemical nickel preplating of the shielding element, by sprinkling boron carbide powder onto the surface, whereupon the shielding element is again nickel-plated by an electrolytic or chemical process. These methods allow only small amounts of boron carbide, on the order of magnitude of 20% by weight relative to the nickel content, to be applied on the surface. Consequently, very thick coatings are needed, so that these prior-art methods are not cost-effective. Nor have these methods really been employed in practice since from the process point of view they are not fully implementable. Sprinkling a powder on a surface is not a procedure that assures reliability in industrial production.

All of the prior-art methods and processes and the shielding elements produced by them can be considered uneconomical due to high production costs and material expenditures. Moreover, they limit variability in terms of the design of the shielding elements and any enhancement of their possible uses.

Producing boron steel is an extremely complex process. The steel is melted, the boron is enriched by complex methods to a valence of up to 10 and mixed with the molten steel. The result is boron steel containing boron at 1.1 to 1.4% by weight. This steel is very difficult to machine, it is extremely brittle and cannot be easily welded. Shielding elements produced from it are extremely heavy while offering only average absorption properties. As an example, storage container inserts, known as baskets, used for the interim storage of fuel rods, weigh as much as about 10 tons.

WO 98/59344 describes a method for producing a neutron-absorbing coating whereby the appropriate surfaces of a shielding element are provided with a boron-nickel layer, for

which purpose the dispersion bath contains boron in its elemental form or as boron carbide. While it is possible to obtain a high rate of boron embedment, that rate is limited when boron is to be embedded in its elemental form, the layer is very hard and thus very brittle. Boron carbide offers only low conductivity, i.e. semiconductive characteristics at best, making it difficult if not impossible to control an electrolytic process. That in turn allows layers to build up only slowly and in poorly structured form. The relative movement involved results in a certain randomness in the structural pattern of the layer. That makes the process in general quite expensive since it is highly complex in terms of the materials used, process control and other parameters.

In view of this state of prior art, it is the **objective** of this invention to introduce an improved method for producing a layer, or shielding elements, for absorbing the neutrons generated in the nuclear reaction of radioactive materials, a method which is cost-effective and easy to implement, which offers enhanced absorption efficacy, which permits greater variability in terms of the base materials and the design of the shielding elements as well as good process control, and, most particularly, which allows for the production of absorbers that combine lighter weight with at least the same absorption capacity.

Proposed as the technical **solution** for meeting this objective is a method for producing a coating designed to absorb the neutrons generated in the nuclear reaction of radioactive materials, whereby, in a dispersion bath, at least part of a shielding element consisting of a base material is provided on its appropriately predefined surfaces with a layer, consisting of an element with a high neutron-capture capability and a metallic, electrolytically or autocatalytically precipitable element, in which process a relative movement is at least intermittently produced during the coating cycle between the respective surface to be coated and the

dispersion bath while the element with the high neutron-capture capability is present in the dispersion bath in the form of an electrically conductive compound.

It has been found that forming for instance a boron-nickel layer in a dispersion bath with a periodic relative movement between the surface to be coated and the dispersion bath yields very good results. Using electrically conductive compounds of elements with a high neutron capture capability permits good control of the electrolysis and, surprisingly, it has been found that the embedment rates can be significantly augmented. That in turn allows for the use of much thinner layers.

Suitable elements with a high neutron capture capability include elements of the group comprising boron whether in elemental form or as boron carbide, gadolinium, cadmium, samarium, europium or dysprosium. The high neutron capture capability is a function of the magnitude of the capture cross-section of the element concerned. Metal compounds have been found to be particularly suitable electric conductors. Among these are metal borides such as iron boride, nickel boride and the like. These are mentioned as examples only and with reference to these elements the list is expandable. Good conductivity means good electrolysis control, so that the method can be implemented under less stringent conditions, in highly dependable and reproducible fashion.

Metallic elements particularly suitable for electrolytic or autocatalytic deposition include nickel, cadmium or copper. The element with a high neutron capture cross-section, or a compound thereof, is embedded in this metal matrix for corresponding effectiveness.

As a particularly advantageous approach it is proposed to employ the isotopes of the elements which display an enlarged neutron capture cross-section. It is a known fact, for example, that using ^{11}B represents a neutron capture cross section of 0.005 barn, while using the isotope ^{10}B represents 3837 barn. This makes thinner layers possible.

The high embedment rates thus result in far greater effectiveness. The absorption layers are produced in orders of magnitude of up to 800 μm . In addition, a particular advantage lies in the fact that the process is independent of the type of base material. In an advantageous fashion an inorganic base material is employed, such as steel, stainless steel, boron steel, titanium, aluminum, copper, nickel and the like, including their corresponding alloys. Although organic, even a carbon fiber material can serve as a possible base material. The particular advantage of carbon fiber material is that the absorption element can be produced by electroplating techniques.

According to the invention, it is further possible to manufacture the absorber as a finished product or as individual components. Given the independence of the process from the base material, easily machinable materials can be used. By the same token, highly complex designs of absorbers, containers, baskets etc. can be completely prefabricated and then coated in accordance with this invention.

The high embedment rate makes the shielding exceedingly effective, allowing for the use of extremely thin layers. Compared to shielding elements produced by conventional methods, a weight reduction by up to 50% is possible. By employing the method per this invention, the 10-ton storage container inserts (baskets) currently used for storing fuel

rods can now be produced in weight sizes from 4 to 6 tons.

The base material can be prefabricated as finished units or as components from which latter complete absorbers can be assembled. The assembly of absorbers or absorber components into complete storage racks or transport baskets can be performed in friction-mounted or form-locking fashion. The invention even permits the coating of complete storage racks and transport baskets. The plating in the dispersion bath is performed either chemically or by electrolysis.

The relative movement between the surface to be coated and the dispersion bath can be accomplished for instance by moving the object to be coated in the dispersion bath. As is commonly known, elements such as boron etc. are of a nature which hardly allows for a cost-effective way to circulate or pump the dispersion around it. Any circulation or rotating system would be worn in short order. Yet the relative movement is intended to permit good continued or repeated mixing of the dispersion while assuring a directionally specific feed of the dispersion onto the surface to be coated. Apart from the movement of the object itself, the entire coating system may be moved for the purpose of creating the relative movement. For example, a type of drum may be considered for the coating process. The relative movement may also be created by mechanically moving the bath, by blowing in gas and especially air, by ultrasonic means, or any combination thereof.

Within the scope of the invention it is proposed as a particularly advantageous step that in the dispersion bath the surface to be coated point upward. In other words, the surface to

be coated should be so positioned in the dispersion bath that by virtue of gravity the particles contained in the dispersion sink down onto that surface. As part of the invention, this configuration, in conjunction with the periodic relative movement between the surface and the dispersion bath, tends to bring about excellent coating results.

As an especially advantageous feature of the invention it is proposed to perform the coating process in a ceramic or glass vessel which ensures a particularly pure dispersion bath.

The invention introduces an easy-to-perform, cost-effective and highly efficacious method for producing absorbers for neutron absorption, permitting in particular the base-material-independent fabrication of absorbers which, at comparable levels of absorptivity, weigh considerably less than conventional shielding elements.

The invention further relates to absorbers produced by the method described. These are characterized in that they are coated with a layer consisting of an element with a high neutron capture cross-section and of nickel, wherein the element or a compound thereof with a high neutron capture cross section is present at a concentration of up to 60% by volume or, respectively, 40% by volume. The layer is 350 to 500 and up to 800 μm thick and is formed on an inorganic base material such as steel, titanium, copper or the like. Layer thicknesses of up to 2000 μm are feasible. The layers are formed chemically or by electrolysis. The shielding element can be coated either as a finished product or assembled from individually coated components. Examples of suitable electrolytes include surface-leakage current-free nickel-phosphorus or electrolytic nickel.

As part of a test, conventional steel plates were electrolytically plated in a nickel/boron carbide dispersion bath. The steel plates were turned in the bath every half hour and intermittently moved up and down in order to create a relative movement between the surfaces and the dispersion bath, but also to turn the surface to be coated so as to face upward within the bath. As verified in subsequent analyses, it was possible to embed boron carbide in the nickel matrix at a concentration in the range of 40% by volume.

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Patent Claims

1. Method for producing a coating for the absorption of neutrons generated in the nuclear reaction of radioactive materials, whereby, in a dispersion bath, at least part of a shielding element, consisting of a base material, is coated on its appropriately predefined surfaces with a layer composed of an element with a high neutron capture cross-section and of an electrolytically or autocatalytically precipitable metallic element, while at least intermittently during the coating process a relative movement is generated between the respective surface to be coated and the dispersion bath which dispersion bath contains the element with the high neutron capture cross-section in the form of an electrically conductive compound.
2. Method as in claim 1, characterized in that the element with the high neutron capture cross-section is at least one of the elements of the group comprising boron, gadolinium, cadmium, samarium, europium and dysprosium.
3. Method as in one of the preceding claims, characterized in that the electrolytically or autocatalytically precipitable metallic element is one of the elements of the group comprising nickel, cadmium and copper.
4. Method as in one of the preceding claims, characterized in that the electrically conductive compound of the element with the high neutron capture cross-section is a metallic compound.



5. Method as in one of the preceding claims, characterized in that the electrically conductive compound of the element with the high neutron capture cross-section is a metal boride.
6. Method as in one of the preceding claims, characterized in that the element with the high neutron capture cross-section is in the form of an isotope with an augmented neutron capture cross-section.
7. Method as in one of the preceding claims, characterized in that the relative movement is generated by moving the object to be coated.
8. Method as in one of the claims 1 to 6, characterized in that the relative movement is generated by blowing in a gas and/or by introducing ultrasound waves.
9. Method as in one of the preceding claims, characterized in that the coating is formed by chemical means.
10. Method as in one of the claims 1 to 8, characterized in that the coating is formed by electrolysis.
11. Method as in one of the preceding claims, characterized in that a coating with a layer thickness of up to 800 µm is produced.
12. Method as in one of the preceding claims, characterized in that the element with the high neutron capture cross-section, or any of its compounds, is embedded in the metal matrix at a concentration of up to 60% by volume.

13. Method as in one of the preceding claims, characterized in that at least periodically during the coating process the dispersion bath is thoroughly mixed.

14. Method as in one of the preceding claims, characterized in that the process is performed in a ceramic or glass vessel.

15. Absorber produced by the method per at least one of the preceding claims, characterized in that it consists of an inorganic base material and, thereon, a layer composed of an element with a high neutron capture cross-section and an electrolytically or autocatalytically precipitable metallic element, said layer containing an element with a high neutron capture cross-section at more than 20% by volume.



Combined Declaration for Patent Application and Power of Attorney

As a below named inventor, I hereby declare that:

My residence, post office address and citizenship are as stated below next to my name;

I believe that I am the original, first and sole inventor (if only one name is listed below) or an original, first and joint inventor (if plural names are listed below) of the subject matter which is claimed and for which a patent is sought on the invention entitled _____.

Method for producing a coating for absorption of neutrons produced in nuclear reactions of radioactive materials ... the specification of

wh

(check one) is attached hereto.

was filed on May 25, 2001 as Application Serial No. 09/856,816
and (if applicable) was amended on:

I hereby state that I have reviewed and understand the contents of the above identified specification, including the claims, as amended by any amendment referred to above.

I acknowledge the duty to disclose information which is material to the examination of this application in accordance with Title 37, Code of Federal Regulations, §1.56(a).

I hereby claim foreign priority benefits under Title 35, United States Code, § 119 of any foreign application(s) for patent or inventor's certificate listed below and have also identified below any foreign application for patent or inventor's certificate having filing date before that of the application on which priority is claimed:

I hereby claim the benefit under Title 35, United States Code, §120 of any United States Application(s) listed below and, insofar as the subject matter of each of the claims of this application is not disclosed in the prior United States application in the manner provided by the first paragraph of Title 35, United States Code, §112, I acknowledge the duty to disclose material information, as defined in Title 37, Code of Federal Regulation, §1.56(a) which occurred between the filing date of the prior application and the national or PCT international filing date of this application.

PCT/EP99/07166 (Application Serial No.)	September 27, 1999 (Filing Date)	(Status - patented, pending, abandoned)
(Application Serial No.)	(Filing Date)	(Status - patented, pending, abandoned)

I hereby claim the benefit under Title 35, United States Code, § 119(e) of any United States provisional application(s) listed below:

PROVISIONAL APPLICATION NUMBER

FILING DATE

POWER OF ATTORNEY: As a named inventor, I hereby appoint the following attorneys, and/or agents with full power of substitution, association, and revocation, to prosecute this application and to transact all business in the Patent and Trademark Office connected therewith.

Daniel F. Drexler
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Bloomfield, CT 06002



I hereby further declare that all statements made herein of my own knowledge are true and that all statements made on information and belief are believed to be true; and further that these statements were made with the knowledge that willful false statements and the like so made are punishable by fine or imprisonment, or both, under Section 1001 of Title 18 of the United States Code and that such willful false statements may jeopardize the validity of the application of any patent issued thereon.

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